

The Storm

*A Collection of the most Remarkable Casualties
and Disasters which happened in the Late Dreadful
Tempest, both by Sea and Land*

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The Storm; or, a Collection of the most Remarkable Casualties and Disasters

First Edition

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A Note On This Edition

This edition of *The Storm* is based on the 1704 first edition, originally printed in London by George Sawbridge and sold by J. Nutt. While the text is reproduced complete and unabridged, we have modernized spelling and capitalization for the contemporary reader, and rationalized the original italics to improve legibility. Punctuation follows the primary source faithfully, with corrections limited to clear typographic errors.

The advertisement preceding the preface is transcribed from the original notice in *The London Gazette* (December 2, 1703). As the public invitation that directly preceded and informed Defoe's research, its inclusion here restores the historical sequence of the work's creation and offers a unique look at the book's journalistic origins.

We have also included two essential companion pieces: *The Storm, An Essay* and *The Layman's Sermon Upon the Late Storm*. These works complement the main narrative, providing a window into the wider cultural and spiritual interpretation of the tempest. Traditionally paired with the history itself, they form a comprehensive record of Defoe's engagement with the events of 1703.

We trust that these pages, recovered and restored, will serve as a faithful witness to a night long remembered, and a worthy addition to the modern library.

North Pass Press

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The Preface

Preaching of sermons is speaking to a few of mankind: printing of books is talking to the whole world. The parson prescribes himself, and addresses to the particular auditory with the appellation of *My brethren*; but he that prints a book, ought to preface it with a *Noverint Universi* Know all men by these presents.

The proper inference drawn from this remarkable observation, is, that though he that preaches from the pulpit ought to be careful of his words, that nothing pass from him but with an especial sanction of truth; yet he that prints and publishes to all the world, has a tenfold obligation.

The sermon is a sound of words spoken to the ear, and prepared only for present meditation, and extends no farther than the strength of memory can convey it; a book printed is a record, remaining in every man's possession, always ready to renew its acquaintance with his memory, and always ready to be produced as an authority or voucher to any reports he makes out of it, and conveys its contents for ages to come, to the eternity of mortal time, when the author is forgotten in his grave.

If a sermon be ill grounded, if the preacher imposes upon us, he trespasses on a few; but if a book printed obtrudes a falsehood, if a man tells a lie in print, he abuses mankind, and imposes upon the whole world, he causes our children to tell lies after us, and their children after them, to the end of the world.

This observation I thought good to make by way of preface, to let the world know, that when I go about a work in which I must tell a great many stories, which may in their own nature seem incredible, and in which I must expect a great part of mankind will question the sincerity of the relator; I did not do it without a particular sense upon me of the proper duty of an historian, and the abundant duty laid on him to be very wary what he conveys to posterity.

I cannot be so ignorant of my own intentions, as not to know, that in many cases I shall act the divine, and draw necessary practical inferences from the extraordinary remarkables of this book, and some digressions which I hope may not be altogether useless in this case.

And while I pretend to a thing so solemn, I cannot but premise I should stand convicted of a double imposture, to forge a story, and then preach repentance to the reader from a crime greater than that I would have him repent of: endeavouring by a lie to correct the reader's vices, and sin against truth to bring the reader off from sinning against sense.

Upon this score, though the undertaking be very difficult amongst such an infinite variety of circumstances, to keep exactly within the bounds of truth; yet I have this positive assurance with me, that in all the subsequent relation, if the least mistake happen, it shall not be mine.

If I judge right, 'tis the duty of an historian to set everything in its own light, and to convey matter of fact upon its legitimate authority, and no other: I mean thus (for I would be as explicit as I can), that where a story is vouched to him with sufficient authority, he ought to give the world the special testimonial of its proper voucher, or else he is not just to the story: and where it comes without such sufficient authority, he ought to say so; otherwise he is not just to

himself. In the first case he injures the history, by leaving it doubtful where it might be confirmed past all manner of question; in the last he injures his own reputation, by taking upon himself the risk, in case it proves a mistake, of having the world charge him with a forgery.

And indeed, I cannot but own it is just, that if I tell a story in print for a truth which proves otherwise, unless I, at the same time, give proper caution to the reader, by owning the uncertainty of my knowledge in the matter of fact, it is I impose upon the world; my relator is innocent, and the lie is my own.

I make all these preliminary observations, partly to inform the reader, that I have not undertaken this work without the serious consideration of what I owe to truth, and to posterity; nor without a sense of the extraordinary variety and novelty of the relation.

I am sensible, that the want of this caution is the foundation of that great misfortune we have in matters of ancient history; in which the impudence, the ribaldry, the empty flourishes, the little regard to truth, and the fondness of telling a strange story, has dwindled a great many valuable pieces of ancient history into mere romance.

How are the lives of some of our most famous men, nay, the actions of whole ages, drowned in fable? Not that there wanted penmen to write, but that their writings were continually mixed with such rodomontades¹ of the authors that posterity rejected them as fabulous.

From hence it comes to pass that matters of fact are handed down to posterity with so little certainty, that nothing is to be depended upon; from hence the uncertain account of things and actions in the remoter ages of the

¹boastful, arrogant, or vainglorious speech or behavior

world, the confounding the genealogies as well as achievements of Belus, Nimrod, and Ninus, and their successors, the histories and originals of Saturn, Jupiter, and the rest of the celestial rabble, whom mankind would have been ashamed to have called *Gods*, had they had the true account of their dissolute, exorbitant, and inhuman lives.

From men we may descend to action: and this prodigious looseness of the pen has confounded history and fable from the beginning of both. Thus the great flood in Deucalion's time is made to pass for the universal deluge: the ingenuity of Dedalus, who by a clue of thread got out of the Egyptian maze, which was thought impossible, is grown into a fable of making himself a pair of wings, and flying through the air:— the great drought and violent heat of summer, thought to be the time when the great famine was in Samaria, fabled by the poets and historians into Phaeton borrowing the chariot of the sun, and giving the horses their heads, they run so near the earth as burnt up all the nearest parts, and scorched the inhabitants, so that they have been black in those parts ever since.

These, and such like ridiculous stuff, have been the effects of the pageantry of historians in former ages: and I might descend nearer home, to the legends of fabulous history which have swallowed up the actions of our ancient predecessors, King Arthur, the Giant Gogmagog, and the Britain, the stories of St. George and the Dragon, Guy Earl of Warwick, Bevis of Southampton, and the like.

I'll account for better conduct in the ensuing history: and though some things here related shall have equal wonder due to them, posterity shall not have equal occasion to distrust the verity of the relation.

I confess here is room for abundance of romance, because the subject may be safer extended than in any other

case, no story being capable to be crowded with such circumstances, but infinite power, which is all along concerned with us in every relation, is supposed capable of making true.

Yet we shall nowhere so trespass upon fact, as to oblige infinite power to the shewing more miracles than it intended.

It must be allowed, that when nature was put into so much confusion, and the surface of the earth and sea felt such extraordinary a disorder, innumerable accidents would fall out that, till the like occasion happen, may never more be seen, and unless a like occasion had happened, could never before be heard of: wherefore the particular circumstances being so wonderful, serve but to remember posterity of the more wonderful extreme, which was the immediate cause.

The uses and application made from this terrible doctrine, I leave to the men of the pulpit; only take the freedom to observe, that when heaven itself lays down the doctrine, all men are summoned to make applications by themselves.

The main inference I shall pretend to make or at least venture the exposing to public view, in this case, is, the strong evidence God has been pleased to give in this terrible manner to his own being, which mankind began more than ever to affront and despise: and I cannot but have so much charity for the worst of my fellow creatures, that I believe no man was so hardened against the sense of his Maker, but he felt some shocks of his wicked confidence from the convulsions of nature at this time.

I cannot believe any man so rooted in atheistical opinions, as not to find some cause to doubt whether he was not in the wrong, and a little to apprehend the possibility of a Supreme Being, when he felt the terrible blasts of this tempest. I cannot doubt but the Atheist's hardened soul trembled a little as well as his house, and he felt some nature asking

him some little questions; as these — *Am not I mistaken? Certainly there is some such thing as a God — What can all this be? What is the matter in the world?*

Certainly Atheism is one of the most irrational principles in the world; there is something incongruous in it with the test of human policy, because there is a risk in the mistake one way, and none another. If the Christian is mistaken, and it should at last appear that there is no future state, God or Devil, reward or punishment, where is the harm of it? All he has lost is, that he has practised a few needless mortifications, and took the pains to live a little more like a man than he would have done. But if the Atheist is mistaken, he has brought all the Powers, whose being he denied, upon his back, has provoked the Infinite in the highest manner, and must at last sink under the anger of him whose nature he has always disowned.

I would recommend this thought to any man to consider of, one way he can lose nothing, the other way be undone. Certainly a wise man would never run such an unequal risk: a man cannot answer it to common arguments, the law of numbers, and the rules of proportion are against him. No gamester will set at such a main; no man will lay such a wager, where he may lose, but cannot win.

There is another unhappy misfortune in the mistake too, that it can never be discovered till it is too late to remedy. He that resolves to die an Atheist, shuts the door against being convinced in time.

*If it should so fall out, as who can tell,
But that there is a God, a Heaven, and Hell,
Mankind had best consider well for fear,
‘Tshould be too late when his mistakes appear.*

I should not pretend to set up for an instructor in this case, were not the inference so exceeding just; who can but preach where there is such a text? When God himself speaks his own power, he expects we should draw just inferences from it, both for ourselves and our friends.

If one man, in an hundred years, shall arrive at a conviction of the being of his Maker, it is very worth my while to write it, and to bear the character of an impertinent fellow from all the rest.

I thought to make some apology for the meanness of style, and the method, which may be a little unusual, of printing letters from the country in their own style.

For the last I only leave this short reason with the reader, the desire I had to keep close to the truth, and hand my relation with the true authorities from whence I received it, together with some justice to the gentlemen concerned, who, especially in cases of deliverances, are willing to record the testimonial of the mercies they received, and to set their hands to the humble acknowledgment. The plainness and honesty of the story will plead for the meanness of the style in many of the letters, and the reader cannot want eyes to see what sort of people some of them come from.

Others speak for themselves, and being writ by men of letters, as well as men of principles, I have not arrogance enough to attempt a correction either of the sense or style; and if I had gone about it, should have injured both author and reader.

These come dressed in their own words because I ought not, and those because I could not mend them. I am persuaded, they are all dressed in the desirable, though unfashionable, garb of truth, and I doubt not but posterity will read them with pleasure.

The gentlemen, who have taken the pains to collect and transmit the particular relations here made public, I hope will have their end answered in this essay, conveying hereby to the ages to come the memory of the dreadfulest and most universal judgment that ever Almighty Power thought fit to bring upon this part of the world.

And as this was the true native and original design of the first undertaking, abstracted from any part of the printer's advantage, the editor and undertakers of this work, having their ends entirely answered, hereby give their humble thanks to all those gentlemen who have so far approved the sincerity of their design as to contribute their trouble, and help forward by their just observations, the otherwise very difficult undertaking.

If posterity will but make the desired improvement both of the collector's pains, as well as the several gentlemen's care in furnishing the particulars, I dare say they will all acknowledge their end fully answered, and none more readily than

The Age's Humble Servant.

Advertisement

London Gazette — December 2, 1703

To preserve the remembrance of the late dreadful tempest, an exact and faithful collection is preparing of the most remarkable disasters which happened on that occasion, with the places where, and persons concerned, whether at sea or on shore. For the perfecting so good a work, 'tis humbly recommended by the author to all gentlemen of the clergy, or others, who have made any observations of this calamity, that they would transmit as distinct an account as possible, of what they have observed, to the undertakers, directed to John Nutt near Stationers' Hall, London. All gentlemen that are pleased to send any such accounts, are desired to write no particulars but what they are well satisfied to be true, and to set their names to the observations they send, which the undertakers of this work promise shall be faithfully recorded, and the favour publicly acknowledged.

Chapter 1

Of the natural causes and original of winds

Though a system of exhalation, dilation, and extension, things which the ancients founded the doctrine of winds upon, be not my direct business, yet it cannot but be needful to the present design to note, that the difference in the opinions of the ancients, about the nature and original of winds, is a leading step to one assertion which I have advanced in all that I have said with relation to winds, viz.: — that there seems to be more of God in the whole appearance, than in any other part of operating nature.

Nor do I think I need explain myself very far in this notion: I allow the high Original of nature to be the Great Author of all her actings, and by the strict rein of his Providence, is the continual and exact guide of her executive power; but still it is plain that in some of the principal parts of nature she is naked to our eye. Things appear both in their causes and consequences, demonstration gives its assistance, and finishes our further inquiries: for we never inquire after God in those works of nature which depending upon the course of things are plain and demonstrative; but where we find nature defective in her discovery, where we see effects but cannot reach their causes; there it is most just, and nature herself seems to direct us to it, to end the rational inquiry, and reserve it into speculation: nature plainly refers us beyond herself, to the mighty hand of Infinite Power, the Author of nature, and Original of all causes.